CASTLEMAINE NATURALIST

MAY 1981

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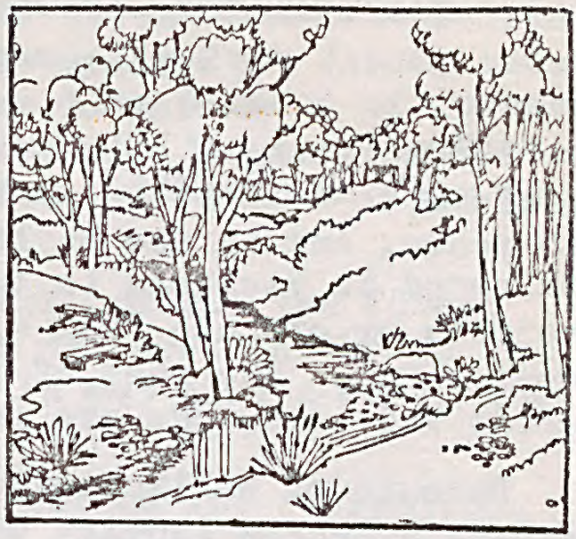


President : Mr G. Sitch Ph. 72 2734
Secretary : Mrs M. Lindsay 72 2720
Treasurer : Mr F. Meyer 72 1958
Newsletter: Mr C. Broadway 72 2513

Monthly meetings of the club are held on the second Friday of the month, at 8 pm. in the Castlemaine Education Centre, above the S.E.C. offices in Mostyn Street.

Club outings are usually held on the Saturday following the monthly meeting.

Visitors and prospective members are most welcome to attend club functions.

ANOTHER RECORDING SYSTEM FOR THE CLUB !

E. Perkins.

All local botanists have been asked to assist Cliff Beauglehole by providing plant lists for the forthcoming book on the distribution of plants in the North-Central area. The closing date is December of this year.

The plants will be listed to show the block of public land in which they occur. The land status will follow that of the Land Conservation Council recommendations.

The job seems to be a difficult one. There are dozens of blocks of public land near Castlemaine, and the boundaries of these are often not very clear.

Still, we should do as best we can. The centrefold of this issue shows the main blocks and the approximate boundaries. The blocks are numbered to correspond with the master plant list supplied by Mr Beauglehole. Our job is to tick the columns of this list.

Photocopies of the list will be available to club members who are willing to take part.

The record sheets will be a valuable record for this club in the future; this is another reason for us to take part in the plan.

WOODCHIPPING IN VICTORIA

A summary of the talk given to the CFNC by Mr Kevin Waring of the Forests Commission of Victoria on 10-4-81

Woodchipping - or harvesting of pulpwood as the Forest Commission prefers to call it - has been carried out in the Central Highlands for 40 years, and in the Daylesford area for 20 years. The timber used for pulpwood in Victoria is those logs which are unsuitable for milling, rejects or offcuts from saw mills and "rubbish" from clear felling operations. The rest of the timber is used for mill logs. Both softwoods and hardwoods are used.

Because of public concern over woodchipping, especially export to Japan, a Senate inquiry was set up in 1977. The report issued as a result of the inquiry is available from the Victorian Government publisher. The committee, which is still in existence, felt there was no need to curtail the industry; that there was need for more research; were cautious about new proposals, but considered the possibilities of using sawmill waste.

As a result of this, the Forest Commission is in the process of preparing an Environmental Effects Statement , which is due to be submitted to the specially hired independent consultants by the end of May. Shortly after it will be released for public comment. The Commission wants comment both from individuals and organisations. There will be a period of about 60 days in which to do so.

East Gippsland, with its large areas of forested crown land, is of most interest to the Commission for harvesting hardwood, and has been since 1960. Most sawn hardwood comes from there. However, in 1974, the Premier decided that there would be no committment before the L.C.C. report for East Gippsland was released. The L.C.C. recommendations still left the option for pulpwood open, but advised an environmental assessment on long term effects.

The Environmental Effects Statement is to assess whether any pulpwood should be taken at all, and, if so, whether it should be taken as chips or pulp and how processing is to be carried out.

Mr Waring gave an outline of the advantages for Gippsland if the industry should go ahead, for example the growth of Orbost as an important centre, and employment opportunities. He explained the proposed methods of clearing, allowing regrowth and resting. No new harvesting would take place for 80 years.

"Clear Felling" - necessary because all forests have areas of trees of the same age, therefore clear felling is "natural". Clear felled lots are only about 80 acres in size, surrounded by a band of forest.

Daylesford, Walhalla and Mt Cole are all second growth forests, and all these areas were clear felled in the mining period, therefore "to maintain potential timber production, clear felling is needed".

Several members expressed concern that the Forest Commission and the Government cannot really say that whole areas of forest won't be felled for pulpwood if the demand becomes greater, especially from Japan, becau other areas, like parts of the Philippines, have been denuded of forests for woodchips. Mr Waring felt that this would not be the case in Victor and remarked that many people shared this concern, although he felt it was unjustified.

Another member raised the question of how much control the Forest Commission holds over treefellers and bulldozer drivers. Although in theory they must follow the F.C. rulings, this is not always done, and trees are taken, or destroyed by carelessness.

Restraint is necessary, because areas are needed for recreation, catchments, and the preservation of flora and fauna. Steep slopes liable to erode are not supposed to be cleared, nor are waterways. He admitted that flora and fauna and recreation reserves are often on areas which are uneconomical to harvest, or on soils which erode when cleared.

Asked about the amount of paper which has been manufactured by APM over the years, Mr Waring explained that they had obtained their softwood mainly from their own plantations, and hardwood had come from road re-alignment and widening, from the areas to be covered by water in new reservoirs, and from sawmill rejects and offcuts. Most hardwood was taken from between Healesville and Bruthen, mainly from between Healesville and Heyfield.

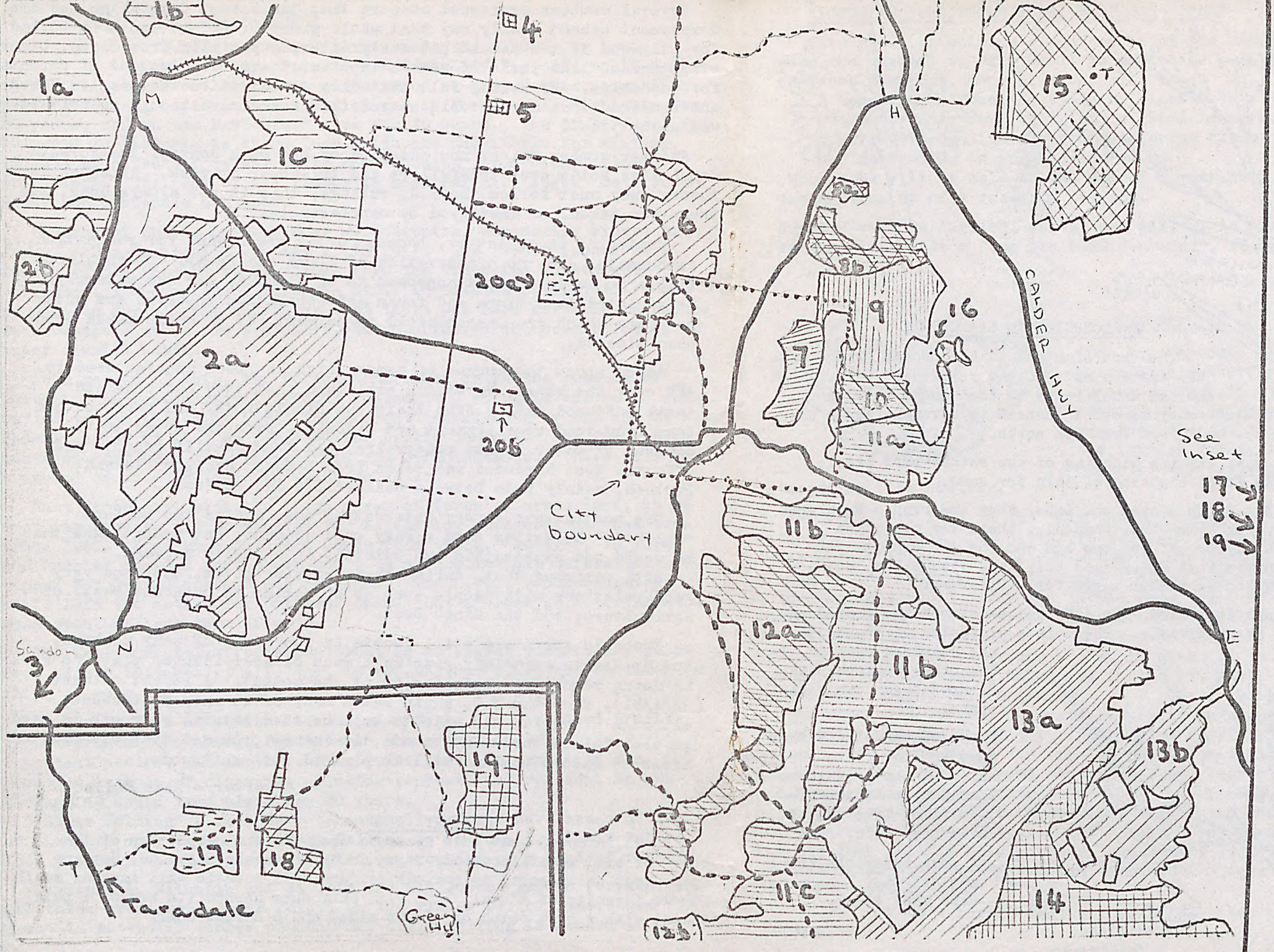
The meeting was a very interesting one, and as two members remarked," Mr Waring gave a very good account, and sympathised that he could not express his own opinions as a public servant."
Both remarked that, during their working lives, they had very good relations with people such as Mr Waring in both the Dept. of Agriculture, and the Mines Dept.

Probably there are still doubts in the minds of many members, but Mr Waring certainly gave us a much clearer idea of what the F.C. is doing regarding woodchipping at the moment. A recent release (22/4/81), from the F.C. again makes many of us uneasy, because, although Mr Waring was able to tell us that natural regrowth is used in clearfelled hardwood forests, it is now proposed that clearfelled areas in East Gippsland will be planted with softwoods.

Reporter - Rita Mills

MYSTERY BIRD

It was intended that this space be used for the completion of the story of bird identification, begun in last month's magazine. However space does not permit, so anxious readers will have to wait another month for the identity of a small bird with buff bars across its wings, a pale throat with a rust patch on either side, and a curved beak.



HISTORIC AREA

1a Tarrengower
b Nuggetty
c Smiths Reef
11a Chewton
b Fryerstown
c Glenluce

HARDWOOD

2a Muckleford
b M'ford West
3 Sandon
6 Wattle Flat
13 Fryers Ridge

WILDFLOWER RES

4 Walmer N.
5 Walmer S.
14 Fryers Ridge
19 Emberton

Cast. City

7 Kalimna

UNCOMMITTED

8a Barkers C. Nth
b Barkers C. Sth
10 Moonlight Flat
12 Irishtown
18 Taradale

SOFTWOOD

9 Cast. Nth

STATE PARK

15 Mt Alexander

EDUCATION AREA

16 Faraday

BUSHLAND RESERVES

17 Taradale
20a Muckleford
b Muckleford

Scale
1cm: 1km.

BHL

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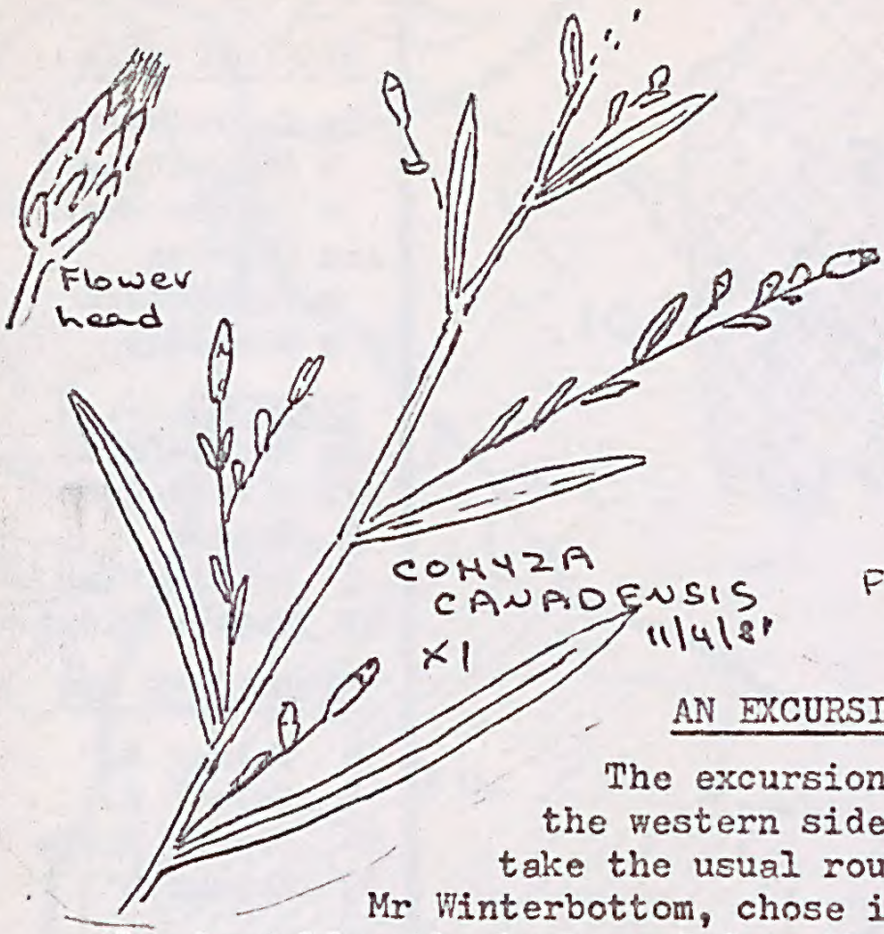
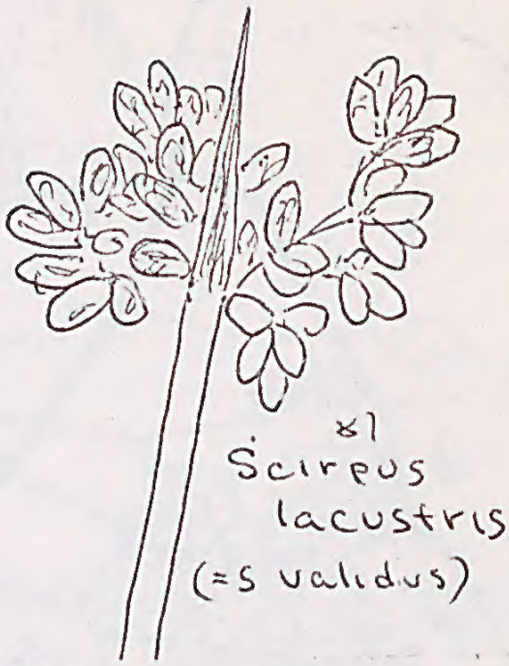




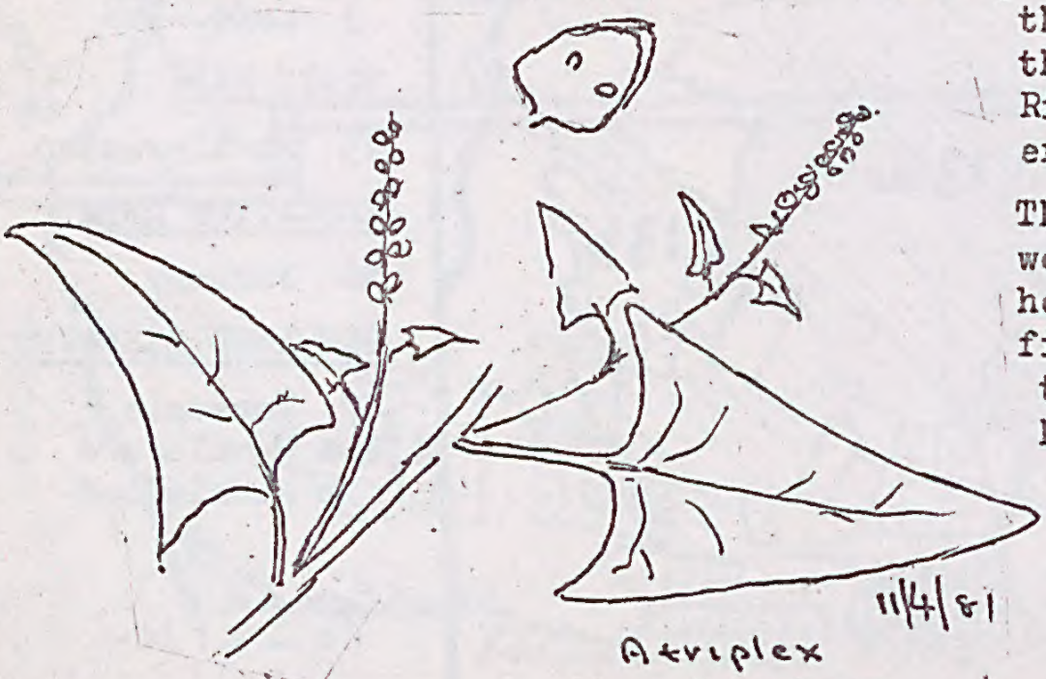
AN EXCURSION TO LAANCOORIE 11/4/81

The excursion was to the Broken Bridge on the western side of the reservoir. Rather than take the usual route to the south, the leader, Mr Winterbottom, chose instead to circumnavigate the dam by taking the bush road from the north.

Highlight for many was the sighting of the rather rare Little Friarbird - the first sighting of this for some.

Mr Blake and his group stayed on. Later they observed a Water-rat swimming near some Swamp-hen. Suddenly, there was commotion with two birds flying off and one hen and the rat disappeared Text-books confirm that Water-rats will take live birds, but a Swamp-hen seems to be rather large for a Water-rat!

Part of the bank is grazed. The difference between the grazed and ungrazed area is remarkable. There is a profusion of plants in the ungrazed section. In the other, not even the River-Red-gum can regenerate.



Three of the plants that were in flower are sketched here. I was pleased to find Conyza canadensis- the first time that I have seen this.

A most enjoyable trip, and one that I hope to make many times.

EP

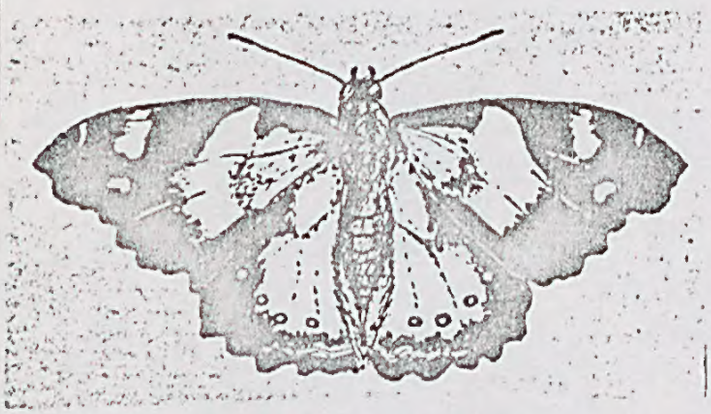
VICTORIAN ORNITHOLOGICAL RESEARCH GROUP

This group is holding a conference at the University of Melbourne over the weekend of July 24-26 to encourage people to consider local research projects. Some of these will be :-

A breeding and banding study of blackbirds
The observation and recording of bird behaviour.
A long-term banding study of wintering flame robins.
How many birds in your garden ?

Workshops will be held on the use of a computer, and sonagraph, and the setting up of a research project.

Numbers will be limited, acceptance will be in order of application. Further information from the VORG Secretary, PO Box 203, Sth Mlbne. 3205



BUTTERFLIES

It was reported last year that the Large Blue Butterfly, Maculinea arion, is now extinct in Gt Britain. Its passing must be noted with regret as was formerly the largest "Blue" in the British Isles. A search for the cause of the extinction reveals a very interesting life history.

The eggs were laid on the Wild Thyme, Thymus drucei, and the newly hatched caterpillars fed on the flowers and seeds of the plant for three weeks, after which they dropped to the ground beneath. Special glands on the caterpillars produced a sweet secretion which attracted ants. The ants would carry the larvae into their nests, where they would tend them in return for the secretion which they would obtain by "milking" the caterpillars. The caterpillars however claimed a heavy price for their favours - they in turn fed on ant larvae. During Winter they would hibernate in the ant nest, then in the Spring they would pupate, before emerging as a butterfly in Summer.

The ants were of two species, especially Myrmica sabuleti, which lives only in areas where the turf is kept short by grazing animals. However over large areas the grazing pattern has altered in recent years , cattle have replaced sheep which had become unprofitable, and Myxomatosis has decimated the rabbit population. Thus the two major requirements of the Large Blue, Wild Thyme and short turf have not occurred in large areas, and the result has been that the species has not been able to hold its own, and so has joined the list of species which have become extinct because of alteration of their preferred environment

(from a report in the "new Scientist", November 1979)

Club Calendar

Friday: May 8

Meeting: Members and visitors night. Remember to bring along a slide, specimen, artefact, or observation to share with other members.

Saturday May 9:

Outing: Muckleford Forest. To investigate the area which was recently burnt. A trip of about 30 km over fairly good gravel roads, with a few short walks.

Friday, June 12.

Meeting: Film night. An interesting program of 16 mm movie films has been arranged.

Saturday, June 13

Outing: A walk through the pine forest to the North of Castlemaine. Leader, Rita Mills. Only mildly strenuous. (We hope).

Friday, July 10.

Meeting : "Tourist, Student & Forester in the U.S.A." Speaker, Mr David Buntine

Saturday, July 11.

Outing: Emberton. A visit to block H16 on the L.C.C. map. This area has been designated a flora reserve, and as it is not far from C'maine, it is felt that we should become familiar with it.

Friday , August 14

Meeting: Members & visitors night. Another opportunity to share experiences with other members of the club.

Saturday, August 15.

Outing: The Wellsford Forest. This is an area which is very rich botanically. As it is further than the usual excursion, it will be a full day trip. Further details later.

Sep 11 12 Oct 9 10

Western Victorian Field Naturalists Clubs Association Campout

August 28, 29, 30, 1981. Venue: BAMBRA Camp, 10 km from Winchelsea Winchelsea. Hosted by the Colac Club.

Accommodation :

(a) Bambra Camp. Dormitory type , limited nos. of beds, space for some portable beds.
Some unpowered sites for caravans, plentiful tent sites.
Cost: $3 per person per day, for electricity, heating, kitchen.

(b) Winchelsea Hotels : 17 people at about $11 bed & breakfast.

(c) Winchelsea Caravan Park: $4 per night for powered site, for 2 people. $3 unpowered.

(d) Colac, 32 km away. Caravan parks, Motels, Hotels.
For further information, contact Secretary.